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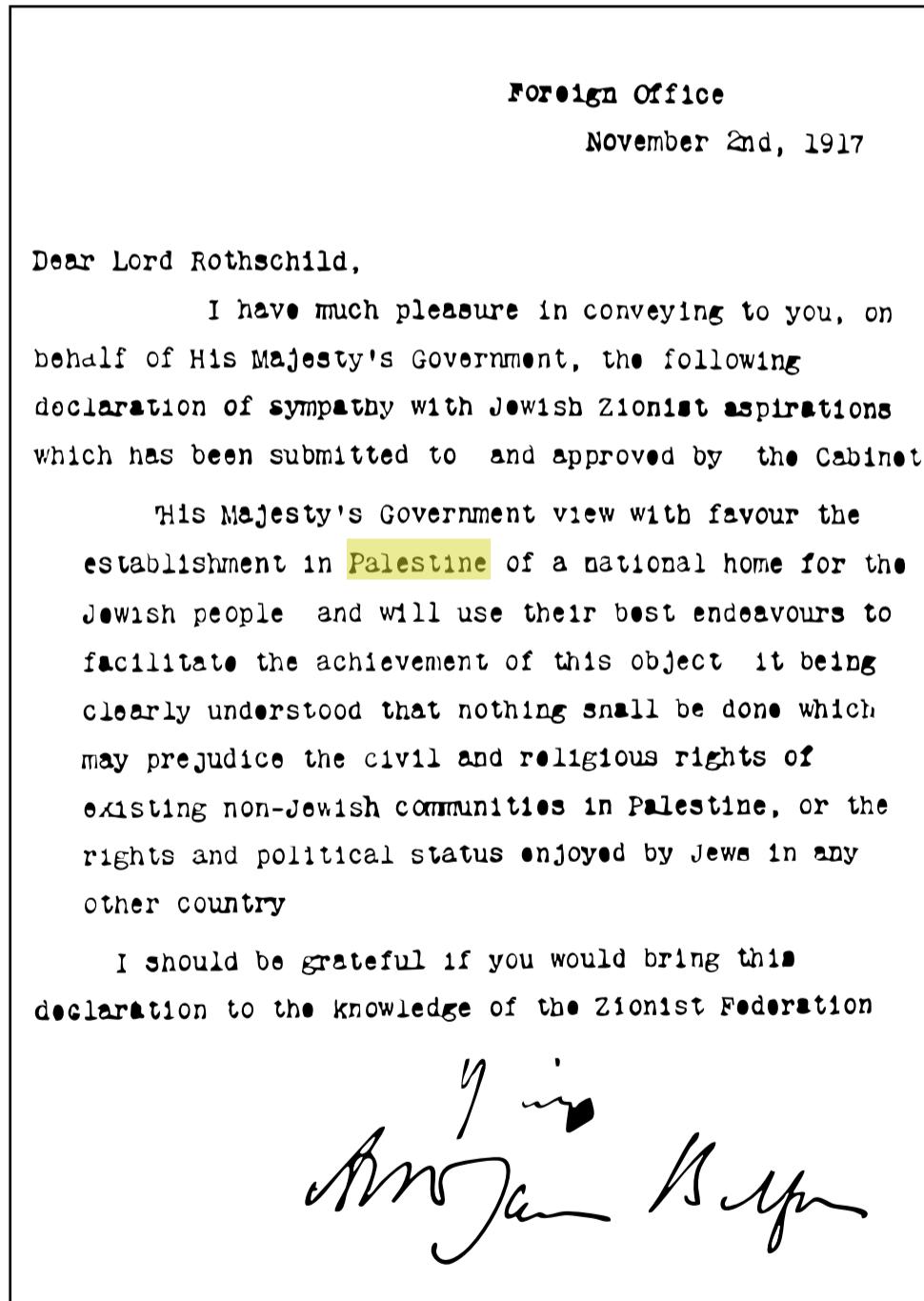# Normalisation Agreements and Their Implications on the Palestinian Cause
–The Israeli Perspective: Expansion through Legitimacy and the Erosion of Justice

Introduction: Legitimacy Without Justice

Since its establishment on Palestinian Nakba in 1948, the Israeli occupying state has pursued not only dominance and power –under alleged claims of survival– but legitimacy, as it embodied the transformation of a colonial-settler project into a permanent member of the international community. Normalisation has been the principal vehicle for achieving that goal. Presented to the world as a path toward peace and modernisation, it has instead operated as a mechanism for consolidating dominance.

This process is grounded in a deeper political logic: peace, from the Israeli standpoint, does not require justice but acceptance. The normalisation of Israel's existence in the region, its integration into Western alliances, and its growing regional and international economic partnerships have all occurred alongside the continued dispossession and political exclusion of Palestinians. From the Balfour Declaration to the Abraham Accords, the Palestinian people have been intentionally and strategically marginalised from the very diplomatic frameworks that define their fate.

Normalisation on the institutional governmental level, therefore, represents Israel's strategy of existence through acceptance. An approach that reframes occupation as order, colonisation as cooperation, and apartheid as stability. The sections that follow trace this trajectory from its imperial origins to its modern geopolitical expressions.

Foreign Office
November 2nd, 1917

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to and approved by the Cabinet

His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation

The original letter from Balfour to Rothschild -November 2nd, 1917. [Wikipedia]

DISCLAIMER

Historical Foundations: The Normalisation of Absence

The erasure of Palestinians from the political record begins with the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which promised support for a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine while referring only vaguely to "non-Jewish communities." This deliberate linguistic exclusion transformed the indigenous Palestinian population from a political subject into a demographic detail. Under the British Mandate, that erasure became bureaucratic policy. Following which land laws, immigration regulations, and policing strategies all advanced the Zionist project while constraining Palestinian agency and sovereignty.

When the United Nations adopted Resolution 181 in 1947, dividing the territory into separate Jewish and Arab states, the same logic persisted. Palestinians were granted neither full sovereignty nor the right to define themselves as a nation, as the whole reference to Palestine and Palestinians was omitted. The Nakba of 1948, resulting in the mass displacement and destruction of Palestinian society, was treated as a humanitarian issue rather than the foundational act of state creation. Additionally, in international diplomacy, Israel's admission to the United Nations the following year represented a form of pre-emptive normalisation: it was recognised as a legitimate state before resolving, or even acknowledging, the dispossession upon which it was built.

Moreover, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Israel sought to escape regional isolation through the "periphery doctrine," forging alliances with non-Arab states such as Iran, Turkey, and Ethiopia (Shlaim, 2014). This early outreach model established a precedent: normalisation would not depend on reconciliation with Palestinians but on their circumvention. Recognition by external powers, not by the colonised population, became the metric of legitimacy.

1917   **1947**

UNGA 181 Resolution

From Isolation to Integration: The Phases of Regional Normalisation

Israel's regional strategy unfolded in three major phases, each redefining how recognition and exclusion were balanced.

1 The first phase, from 1948 to 1978, was characterised by isolation and survivalism. The Arab boycott, combined with military confrontation, created an external environment of hostility that Israel converted into diplomatic capital. By presenting itself as a democratic outpost threatened by surrounding autocracies, Israel secured unshakable Western sponsorship, particularly from the United States (Council on Foreign Relations [CFR], 2024).

2 The second phase began with the 1978 Camp David Accords, Israel's first major breakthrough in Arab diplomacy. The treaty with Egypt ended decades of military confrontation, but its structure was telling. It established a bilateral peace that excluded Palestinians, promising only vague "autonomy" for the occupied territory. The absence of enforcement mechanisms regarding occupation or settlements reflected a new regional logic: Israel could normalise its relations without accountability. Egypt's subsequent ostracisation from the Arab League signalled how divisive such an approach was, but for Israel, Camp David marked the transformation of isolation into legitimacy.

3 The third phase, inaugurated by the Oslo Accords (1993–1995), redefined normalisation on two fronts. Internationally, Israel gained the recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and, with it, enhanced diplomatic standing. Domestically, the Oslo Interim Agreement converted direct military occupation into a hybrid regime of control. The newly formed Palestinian Authority managed local governance under Israeli supervision, while Israel retained power over borders, resources, and security (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2021). Ergo, the Oslo Interim Agreement institutionalised dependency and gave Israel an international image of compromise while maintaining de facto sovereignty.

4 By the time the Abraham Accords were signed in 2020, normalisation had reached its apex. Agreements with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan, brokered by the United States, explicitly omitted any reference to ending occupation or recognising Palestinian rights. In the official text of the Abraham Declaration, the word "Palestine" does not appear once. The same silence that characterised the Balfour declaration a century earlier echoed through these accords. Eventually, Israel had succeeded in decoupling regional acceptance from colonial accountability.

Israel's approach to normalisation rests on a consistent principle: expansion through legitimacy. Recognition is treated not as a step towards peace but as an instrument of power. Each new diplomatic or economic partnership strengthens Israel's regional position while weakening the collective leverage of Arab and international actors to demand justice and self-determination for Palestinians.

The Israeli narrative defines peace as the acceptance of its hegemony. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's description of the Abraham Accords as "a dawn of a new Middle East" notably omitted any mention of occupation or self-determination (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). For the Israeli occupying state, normalisation represents the culmination of a long project to recast its image; from a state born of conflict to a hub of innovation and stability.

Economically, this legitimacy is anchored in the fusion of technology, security, and diplomacy. Trade with the UAE alone surpassed USD 2.5 billion by 2022, with most transactions concentrated in surveillance, cybersecurity, and defence technology (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute [SIPRI], 2023). Israeli firms such as Elbit Systems and Israel Aerospace Industries secured multimillion-dollar contracts exporting "occupation-tested" technologies, meaning: tools of population control developed in the West Bank and Gaza and repackaged as solutions for border management and counterterrorism (Amnesty International, 2022).

Normalisation thus builds an infrastructure of control that transcends borders. Arab partners gain access to Israeli security expertise and Western markets, while the occupation state gains political insulation and regional integration. The discourse of "economic peace" functions as a moral alibi, disguising militarisation as development. As Brown (2023) argues, these "cyber alliances" create networks of authoritarian resilience where regimes exchange capital for surveillance capacity, reinforcing occupation under alleged "security concerns."

Ideologically, the Israeli state presents itself as a "Start-Up Nation": a model of modernity whose technological prowess overshadows its colonial reality. By emphasising innovation and shared prosperity, Israeli diplomacy turns the moral question of apartheid into a managerial problem of regional cooperation. The strategy succeeds precisely because it allows foreign partners to support Israel's economy and security while disclaiming responsibility for its actions against Palestinians.

At the core of the Israeli normalisation project lies a century of systematic exclusion. Palestinians were absent from the Balfour Declaration, marginal in the partition plan, and structurally subordinated under the Oslo Interim Agreement. The Abraham Accords complete this pattern: Palestine is no longer even a diplomatic consideration.

This exclusion is not a lapse or oversight; it is the foundation upon which Israeli legitimacy is built. Normalisation depends on the depoliticisation of the Palestinian question. In diplomatic discourse, Palestinians are reframed as recipients of humanitarian assistance rather than a people entitled to sovereignty. Each successive agreement moves further from the recognition of their rights.

The political result is a regional order that treats Palestinian dispossession as background noise. Legal frameworks that once anchored the international consensus, such as UN Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) or Resolution 2334 (2016), are invoked ceremonially but ignored in practice. Nevertheless, Israel's success in normalisation has thrived in convincing the world that peace can be separated from justice, and legitimacy from accountability.

The consequences of this structural exclusion are stark. The Palestinian polity today is fragmented, its institutions weakened by dependency and internal division. The economy remains under occupation, the land and resources divided by illegal settlements and annexation walls, and the political horizon closed. Normalisation has converted the occupation from a temporary anomaly into a regional constant, treating Nakba as historical, not structural; a past tragedy rather than an ongoing system.

ANYONE BUT PALESTINIANS!

THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

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Israel's 2023 continuous genocide in Gaza revealed the moral bankruptcy of the normalisation paradigm. The campaign's scale of destruction, where tens of thousands were killed, 2.5 million displaced, and all forms of life and essential infrastructure destroyed, all exposed the contradiction between the Israeli image as a stabilising power and its reality as an occupying military force who committed genocide.

The Abraham Accords, once marketed as the triumph of "peace through prosperity," suddenly appeared as compacts of complicity. Public opinion across the Arab world turned sharply against normalisation: Boycott campaigns grew larger, surveys conducted by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (2024) showed over 90 percent opposition to diplomatic ties with Israel during the war. Bahrain and Jordan froze aspects of cooperation; Morocco delayed official meetings; Saudi Arabia suspended ongoing negotiations.

Meanwhile, the occupation state attempted to preserve its diplomatic architecture by reframing the war as part of the global "war on terror." Consequently, its allies echoed this framing, emphasising self-defence while ignoring the state's obligations under international and humanitarian laws. Yet, the international legal response was unprecedented, as the International Court of Justice (2024) ordered provisional measures under the Genocide Convention, obliging the Israeli occupying state to prevent genocidal acts in Gaza. In addition to the UN Special Rapporteur (2024) warning that states maintaining normal relations amid such violations risked complicity under international law.

These developments eroded the moral shield that normalisation once provided. What was presented as a framework for regional stability became a symbol of global hypocrisy, simply, a structure of economic cooperation built atop the continuous ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people.

The trajectory of normalisation from the Balfour declaration to the genocide in Gaza demonstrates how legitimacy has been constructed through exclusion. Each diplomatic milestone deepened Israeli integration while erasing Palestinian existence and sovereignty. Through this process, colonial domination was converted into administrative normality, and apartheid became compatible with international partnership.

Yet the events of recent years reveal the limits of this model. Normalisation without justice is inherently unstable: it rests on denial rather than resolution. The Gaza genocide shattered the illusion that economic cooperation could replace breaking down colonial structures of occupation. It forced both regional and international actors to confront the contradictions of recognising a state accused of genocide while proclaiming commitment to a "rules-based order."

True normalisation is a one rooted in equality rather than hierarchy, this requires dismantling the structures of apartheid and recognising the Palestinian right to self-determination as enshrined in UN General Assembly Resolution 3236 (1974). It requires linking diplomatic engagement to international law, not severing them. As for the Israeli state, legitimacy can no longer be built on erasure and impunity; it must arise from accountability and justice.

A century after the Balfour Declaration, the same silence persists, the refusal to name Palestinians as a sovereign people. The challenge for the international community is to reverse that silence, to replace the normalisation of occupation with the normalisation of justice. Only when accountability replaces impunity can peace become more than a diplomatic performance. Until then, normalisation remains what it has always been in the Israeli perspective: the pursuit of expansion through legitimacy, and the erosion of justice in the language of peace and development.

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